

R E A S O N S
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D I S S E N T
F R O M

The RESOLUTION of the
last GENERAL ASSEMBLY of the
Church of *Scotland*,

[To apply to Parliament for Augmentation
of STIPENDS,]

Entered by the Officers of State, &c.

With a short INTRODUCTION.

-----*pro facis.*

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REASONS of DISSENT

F R O M

The Resolution of the last General
Assembly of the Church of *Scotland*, &c,

ALTHOUGH the following Reasons of
Dissent, when presented to the last
General Assembly, were by them ordered to be kept *in retentis*, until, in due time, they should receive a proper Answer; yet, as that Time is not yet come, and perhaps never will, they are now made publick; not so much for the Honour of those who presented them, as for the Benefit and Information of the Country in general.

IT was the Misfortune of this Country, *Scotland*, lately to feel the Calamities of an unprovoked Rebellion; --- a Rebellion raised by Men, who proudly, though falsely, styled themselves the only true Lovers of their Country. --- And now, when that Rebellion is quashed, it is the Misfortune of *Scotland*, again to see a Body of Men, who have been all along preaching and praying for
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the Peace and Quiet of his Majesty's Government, become the first to disturb it.

IT is true, these Gentlemen assume the Name of *Whigs*, and brand those who oppose their Scheme with the Name of *Jacobites*; --- and they are at Liberty to do so. --- Many, very many, of the landed Interest are above that Suspicion, and despise it; and those few of the landed Interest who are not, no doubt, will despise them who make it.

If the Clergy are *Whigs* from Principle, they have their Reward; --- if they are not, they deserve none.

WHAT it was that moved the greatest Part of the Gentlemen, Members of the last Assembly, to oppose the present Scheme for Augmentation of Stipends, the World will see in the following Pages; where they will find nothing of that Ill-nature, or bad Manners, so remarkably shewn in some late Performances. --- They will see, that the Opposition flowed, not from Humour and Pique, but from Reason and Judgment; ----- not from Disaffection to the Protestant Cause, but from the most hearty Concern for its Welfare; -- not from Disregard to the Church of *Scotland*, but from a sincere Desire of seeing her flourish.

THE Constitution of the Church of *Scotland* is one thing, and the Clergy of the Church of *Scotland* are another: --- And he may wish well to the one, who is not at all pleased

pleased with the Conduct of the other. A good Constitution may be endangered by a bad Minister. --- This has been seen in the State in former Reigns, and may be seen in the Church.

How much, and how often the Church of *Scotland* has been supported by the landed Interest in former Times, --- let History testify. And let these Reasons of Dissent testify, how much inclined the landed Interest was, to have supported her even in these Times, --- against the Will and Struggle of many of the Clergy, who fought, with their own Hands, to pull her down. He who hinders a Man to cut his own Throat, saves a Life, as much as he who hinders it from being cut by another.

THAT the Scheme for augmenting the Stipends of the Clergy, will have this melancholly Effect, --- cannot be affirmed certainly, because it is future : --- But if we may be allowed to argue from what is past, or from what is present, such a Conjecture is not unreasonable. --- And it is not easy to conceive how any true Friend of the Church of *Scotland* can be fond of putting it to the Trial. --- *That the Church is in Danger*, is indeed an old Cry : --- But it is the first Time that this Cry was raised and kept up by Laymen only. --- The Clergy have either taken the opposite Side, --- or, a few excepted, sit still, and say nothing.

WITHOUT

WITHOUT entering into the Merits of the Question, one Thing is evident, that the warm Promoters of this Scheme are resolved to push it, be the Opinion of the landed Interest what it will. ----- They disdain their Advice; and say, they need none of their Assistance. ----- They leave the Cause to be determined by the best of Kings, and the best of Parliaments; --- so also say the Gentlemen of *Scotland*; --- to the King and the Parliament they do leave it, --- and they are in little Pain for the Event. --- *To your Tents, O Israel!* it seems, is the Word: --- But *let not him that putteth on his Harness boast, as he that putteth it off.*

It is talked of as a Matter of Right; that the Clergy are seeking but their own, --- and but a Part of their own; --- and sure as *Britons*, and as *Freemen*, they have a Title to demand it. ----- *Right* is a strong Word, and not easily digested; --- and Gentlemen ought to be well informed that they have such a Right, before they thus demand it. However, since it is on this Footing that they rest their Cause, all Arguments from Favour and Expedience are at an End. ----- At some Times indeed, and on some Occasions, they have attempted to flatter; --- at other Times, and on other Occasions, they don't hesitate to offend; --- and, by an open Attempt upon one of the most illustrious Characters of this Country, have shewn what Treatment they are ready to give to others, who are less as-
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fured of the publick Protection than he is. ----- They have endeavoured by Witticisms of the lowest kind, retaled by Hawkers for a Penny, ---- by publick Advertisements, ---- by tedious Pamphlets, --- and, in fine, by all the Artillery of a Paper-war, first to convince their Brethren, that an Augmentation of Stipends was necessary, ---- and then the Gentlemen, that they were extremely indifferent, whether they had their Assistance in obtaining it, or not.

SURE, then, it is Time, if it was ever Time, for those of the landed Interest, who love the Church of *Scotland*, to oppose this hazardous Attempt. ---- As for those who neither love the Church nor the Clergy, --- they may assist the Clergy if they please ; --- let the Clergy look to the Consequences.

As these Reasons of Dissent are published without the Knowledge or Consent of those who presented them, necessary and decent it is, to make Apology to them for the Liberty now taken. ---- Others, all others, may do as they please.

The DISSENT.

IN the various Debates that have occurred, both before General Assemblies and other Committees, concerning a Scheme for augmenting the Stipends of the Ministers of this Church, the chief Points in Controversy having been, *first*, Whether an Application to Parliament was at all necessary or reasonable? *2dly*, If such Application was to be made, whether there should be any Mention in it of increasing the *Minimum* of Stipends, as now fixed by the standing Law? the Assembly, at their Meeting on *Monday* last, after long Reasoning, agreed, without a Division, that an Application should be made to Parliament, representing the distressed Condition of several of the Ministers of *Scotland*, by reason of the Lowness of their Stipends. But as several of us did not give an Assent to that Resolution, but expressly declared against it; and those of us who consented to the Application in general, did so, contrary to our real Opinion, for the Sake of Peace and Unanimity; we apprehend, in regard the Assembly, not contented with a general Application, are resolved to demand an Alteration of the *Minimum* also, that any Concession formerly made, from so good a View, is now dispensed with: And therefore we
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are at Liberty to dissent from every Step which has been made towards such an Application, for the following Reasons.

First, BECAUSE, though we are sensible that several Ministers of the Church of *Scotland* may justly be intitled to such a reasonable Augmentation of their Stipends, as the Extent and State of the Tithes in their respective Parishes can bear ; yet as this may be obtained by the Law as it now stands, we think an Application to Parliament by this Assembly, for an Alteration of the Law, by increasing the *Minimum* or lowest Proportion of Stipends, is improper, unnecessary, and may, at the same time, prove highly dangerous, not only to the true Interest of the Church, but to the Peace also and Tranquillity of the Nation.

Secondly, BECAUSE we find no Precedent for it, when the former Laws were made, in the Years 1617 and 1633, for regulating the Stipends of the parochial Clergy : And we apprehend there cannot be the least Pretext for introducing such an Innovation at this Time, when the Poverty of this Part of the united Kingdom is but too well known ; -----when we still groan under the heavy Taxes necessarily imposed for the Maintenance of a just War, entered into for the Support of the Liberties of *Europe*, and the Defence of our own happy Constitution ; ---and when we yet feel the unhappy Effects

of the late unnatural Rebellion, which has been so pernicious to this Country.

Thirdly, BECAUSE, tho', in former Times, when the Reformation was yet in its Infancy, it might not be unreasonable to ascertain a determined *Minimum*, lest the Titulors and interested Persons, who for the most part had at that Time in their Hands the Power of settling Stipends, might, from partial Considerations, oppose the Clergy; yet no such Pretence can at this Day subsist, since there is now an established Court appointed to judge, not upon what may affect their own Interest, but to determine between the Clergy and other Subjects, agreeably to the Circumstances of the Parish, and the Extent of the Tithes.

Fourthly, BECAUSE the Court of Session, now vested with the Power of the Commission for Plantation of Kirks and Valuation of Tithes, is not tied down to eight Chalders of Victual, or 800 Merks *Scots*, that is, *L. 44, 8 s. 10 $\frac{2}{3}$ d. Sterling*, the present *Minimum*; but is at Liberty to settle the Stipends at what higher Rate they think fit, according to the Circumstances of the Parish, and Extent of the Tithes; the very Scope and Purpose of their Establishment, and which indeed can only be done by such a Court. So it is not in fact true, that any Instance can be given where they did not settle the Stipend much higher, when the Condition of the Parish, and Extent of the Tithes, could possibly

possibly allow it. And we apprehend, that the landed Interest in *Scotland* may look upon it as somewhat extraordinary, that those of the Clergy who promote this Scheme, should attempt to distinguish themselves from the Laity in so essential a Point, as that the Courts of Justice should be absolutely tied down in giving Judgment where their Interest is concerned, but left at large and unrestrained with regard to the Interest of the Laity.

Fifthly, BECAUSE the Increase of the *Minimum* pointed at by the Promoters of this Scheme is unreasonable, and what cannot in Justice be obtained.-----Their first Project was, That no Minister in *Scotland* should have under *L. 80* or *L. 100 Sterling per annum*. Their latest Proposal is, That every Minister should at least have ten Chalders of Victual, or its Value in Money, which throughout near one Half of *Scotland* will amount to *L. 1000 Scots*, or *L. 83 : 6 : 8 Sterling*; a Proportion which many Parishes are in no sort able to bear; since, in some Parishes, there are not free Tithes; in others, no Tithes at all, from which it could possibly be drawn: And though it could be levied, we are still of opinion, that it is an additional Burden much too heavy to be laid upon this poor Country; for we believe, it will be found to amount to about *L. 20,000 Sterling per annum*; a Sum equal to one Half of the Land-tax, and which, at the Rate of Four

per cent. does correspond to a Capital of Half a Million *Sterling*.

Sixthly, BECAUSE, tho' it might be very practicable for the Parliament 1633 to fix this *Minimum* with some Degree of Precision, as they had before them the State of the whole Tithes of the Kingdom, which had been made up by Commissioners appointed for that Purpose; yet as the Parliament of *Great Britain* cannot now have the same Degree of Information, it is manifestly impracticable for them to come to any Determination in this Matter. Besides, as the present *Minimum* is not absolutely fixed, so neither, in common Justice, can any new Proportion be established as the general invariable Rule for all the Parishes in *Scotland*; every single Parish must still stand upon its now distinct Footing, and every respective Stipends must still be determined from an exact Knowledge of the Extent, Income and Produce of the Parish, of the Quantity of Tithes contained in it, and of the Situation and Condition of these Tithes.

Seventhly, BECAUSE it is notorious, that there is already a less Disparity betwixt the lowest and the highest Livings in *Scotland*, than in any other Part of *Europe*. And tho' it may be true, that some particular Ministers are meanly enough provided; yet we shall find, that, in one complex View, the general Amount of their Stipends, free of all Taxes, and even exclusive of very considerable Sums arising

sing from the Value of their Manfes, Glebs, and Grafs, will exceed a Million of Merks Scots, or *L.* 55,555 : 11 : 1 $\frac{1}{3}$ *Sterling*; which we may safely aver to be at least in Proportion equal to the Provision of any other Protestant Clergy. It is not therefore to the Lowness of the general Fund, but to the unequal Distribution of it, that in this, as well as other Countries, the Distress of some particular Clergymen is to be ascribed.----- And this unequal Distribution is in *Scotland* plainly owing to the improper and unjudicious Division of Parishes, of which several are not above two Miles in Circumference; a great many consist of three, two, and others not of more than one hundred Persons: Nay, some have been found, wherein there are not above forty. But if larger Parishes were divided, and such small ones annexed, which might be done by the common Course of Law, without any Application to Parliament, it is believed the End chiefly in View would in a great measure be obtained, and no additional Burden laid upon the landed Interest.

Eighthly, BECAUSE, though we are not insensible to the Distress of the necessitous Clergy, yet we are of Opinion, that some Degree of Sympathy and Commiseration ought also to be had for the narrow Circumstances of other Ranks of Men. It is well known to the Clergy themselves, how many respectable Families reside in their several Parishes,

Parishes, who, not possessed of above *L. 1000 Scots per annum*, and loaded besides with Taxes, and oppressive Debts, are, nevertheless obliged to support a Rank, at least equal to these very Ministers, who would now, by a new Law, force from them a Part of that small Property, which they may justly think themselves intitled to retain. It ought also to be considered, that this Project, though aimed chiefly at the landed Interest; yet, by natural Consequence, cannot fail to affect, proportionably, Tenants, Farmers, and other inferior Classes of Men.

Ninthly, BECAUSE, notwithstanding the prudent and expedient Instruction given by the last Assembly to their Committee, yet, so far as we have been able to learn, we cannot find, that, in consequence of it, any Attempts have been made to explain to the landed Interest the Nature of this Project, and the Motives which gave Rise to it; nor to alleviate the Prejudices, or remove the general Resentment, which it was well known they had conceived against it, by reason of the many unguarded, and (we hope) false Aspersions, which it was publicly reported had been thrown out against them in that Assembly, when deliberating upon this Measure; from which Conduct a Suspicion has arisen, that it is the Design of many of the Clergy, to put themselves in the Balance against the Weight of the whole Gentlemen of Property in *Scotland*.

Tenthly,

Tenthly, BECAUSE, when we consider the Manner in which this Scheme was originally set on Foot, the Methods by which it has been carried on, and the Arguments employed in support of it, we cannot but think, that it has been calculated, not so much for the Relief of distressed Clergymen, as in Prosecution of other Views, which we do not incline to enlarge upon.

Eleventhly, BECAUSE this Project is also contrary to the Opinion and Inclination of many of the wisest and most prudent of the Clergy themselves, who have been justly moved by a Sense of the many fatal Consequences with which they foresee it is likely to be attended.

Twelfthly, BECAUSE it is well known to us, and indeed notorious, that almost the whole landed Interest in *Scotland*, have, in the strongest Terms, declared their Disapprobation of this ill-concerted Project, which they consider in no other Light, than a direct Incroachment upon their undoubted Property, set on Foot by a Body of Men, who either already are, or, by the common Course of Law, may be abundantly provided. And we sincerely think, that no greater Misfortune can befall this Country, than an open Rupture and Contest between the Clergy and Proprietors of Land, who, from the justest Reasons, both of Religion and Policy, have hitherto remained inseparably united, notwithstanding the repeated Efforts of their
common

common Enemies. The Prospect of this unhappy Division, cannot but excite in our Minds the most alarming and melancholly Apprehensions, when we consider the Embarrassment and Disturbance which it may create to his Majesty's quiet and happy Government; the Jealousies and Discontent, which it may raise in the Breasts of many of his faithful Subjects; the manifest Obstruction it must give to the Progress of Piety and Virtue; and, finally, the unavoidable Advantage it will afford to the secret and avowed Enemies of our excellent Constitution and Government, who are ever ready to improve, to their own Benefit, the Misfortunes and Divisions of their Country, by practising upon the Weak, misleading the Unguarded, and inflaming the Disaffected and Discontented.

NAPIER,
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 WILLIAM GRANT,
 CH. ARESKINE,
 PATRICK BOYLE,
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 GILB. ELLIOT,
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 GEORGE SINCLAIR,
 WILL. BINNING,
 JA. KER,
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 JAMES LESLIE.